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SUBJECT: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO NIGERIA

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, STATE, POL;  
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

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SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) During his January 8-9 visit to Nigeria, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met with Nigerian Vice President Jonathan and seven Cabinet members, and signed various "cooperation agreements," according to PRC embassy contacts. End Summary.

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FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT

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¶2. (C) Chinese Foreign Minister Yang held productive meetings with Nigerian Government (GON) officials during his January 8-9 visit to Abuja, according to a readout provided to POLCOUNS and POLOFF (note taker) by Political Counselor Wang Lei and Second Secretary (Political) Peng Yijun at the PRC Embassy in Abuja. Wang said Yang arrived in Abuja during what has become the FonMin's traditional first overseas trip of the new year to Africa. Yang also visited Kenya, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia.

¶3. (C) Wang described Yang's visit as a "qualified success." Yang and Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe held bilateral meetings to discuss Nigeria's two-year non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC), and signed "cooperation documents" prior to a joint press conference. The Chinese FonMin also met

with Vice President Goodluck Jonathan and seven GON Ministers.

¶4. (U) Xinhua quoted Yang as stating that "over the 39 years since China and Nigeria established diplomatic ties, the bilateral relationship has seen sound and steady growth. In recent years, the China-Nigeria strategic partnership established in 2005 has continued to deepen." Yang continued, "The two countries enjoy growing political mutual trust, productive cooperation in economic, trade,

and other fields, as well as mutual support and close collaboration in international affairs." VP Jonathan reportedly said the two countries "support each other on climate change and played a key role in Copenhagen uniting

developing countries."

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PRC VIEW OF CURRENT LEADERSHIP VACUUM  
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15. (C) Wang indicated that President Yar'Adua's prolonged absence had no effect on the FonMin's visit. He explained the PRC is "not necessarily concerned about Yar'Adua's health, nor him as a person. However, the PRC is concerned about stability." Wang said he expects a Northerner to come forward as the presidential candidate in 2011, because he does not expect Yar'Adua to run again or even reassume presidential duties if he returns from medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. Wang rhetorically asked, "Can we exclude a coup?," adding that, "Nigeria's democracy is still young."

16. (C) In the lead up to national elections in 2011, Wang, who witnessed the previous elections in 2007, said he expects "them to

be a little better since 2007 was so bad." Wang explained that the rampant rigging of the 2007 elections had even unnerved senior leaders within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), who vowed not to repeat the widespread fraud in 2011. Wang predicted, however, there would "still be plenty of cheating and not any change in the outcome in the results of next year's election."

17. (C) Describing Nigeria as "special," Wang said, "we have to be careful not to call Nigeria a terrorist country." He added, "There are pockets of extremism," and said, "social, political distortions must be removed." Nigeria is "quite angry" about their TSA listing, Wang noted. He averred, "One must balance security with political relations."

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LOW KEY MEDIA COVERAGE  
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18. (SBU) Nigerian media provided little coverage of Yang's visit, but a January 17 commentary noted that this visit was the first time the Nigerian "Ministerial Standing Committee on Visiting Presidents and Heads of Government" convened to

host a Foreign Minister. The author argued that following the Nigeria's listing as a TSA country of interest, Nigeria is moving closer towards China as an up-and-coming world power.

SANDERS